China is confessedly one of the most remarkable in many respects, one of the most interesting countries on the face of the Globe; & to it more than any other perhaps, is the attention of the civilized world now directed. Its rare & valuable products as objects of commercial speculation, give to it in the eyes of the merchant a preeminence in all his plans to bring the whole world under tribute to the Spirit of Gain. Moreover, its untrodden but forbidden fields are presented to the traveller in the terra incognita of the interior provinces; to the antiquary in its monumental inscriptions, the memorials of ages long gone by: & to the historian in its Legendary Lore, always confused but sometimes authentic, running back to periods preceding by centuries the commencement of our Era. But to the Christian especially should this immense country, with its teeming population, be an object of intense interest; & the thought of such an almost inconceivable multitude of his fellow men, still sitting in the "region & shadow of death", while it oppresses his spirit should rouse his sympathies & incite him to more fervent prayer & more diligent effort. —

The population of China Propers according to the most recent Chinese statistics to which access has been had is 361.693.879. This may appear at first sight entirely incredible, but the Chinese Repository — & the most respectable authors that have recently written upon China — among whom may be mentioned M. Pauthier — present the most weighty & we think satisfactory reasons for placing confidence in the statement: and allowing that the area of the country embraces 1.298.000 sq. Miles — it gives a less number of inhabitants to a square mile than is found in some of the small states of Europe. If to this we add the dependencies of China we will find that the Emperor of Heaven sways his sceptre over almost half the human family

[illegible] dots on the map of the world by the side of his immense, & the entire population of which goes not beyond one hundredth part of his own black-haired race as he calls them.

With regard to the Chinese Characters (to the consideration of which this essay will be principally devoted) there has been much misapprehension & much misrepresentation. By many the Celestial Empire is supposed to be the empire of dulness, & its inhabitants are often exhibited to us, at least in pictorial representations as the very personification of stupidity & indolence. Some would take a driveling stupefyed old Opium Smoker & cause him to sit for the portrait of the whole nation. — With about as much justice might any one consider the bloated visage of a veteran dram-drinker as affording a fair specimen of American physiognomy.

"But however ignorance or caprice may caricature their countenance or their Character, we may safely assert on the authority of those best acquainted with them "that they are one of the most steady, considerate, & matter-of-fact people in the world, who in grave matters of business are often a match for the best Europeans". And so far from being indolent & inactive, quite the contrary is the case. As evidence of this they might point to their Imperial Canal not much short of 600 miles in length constructed before the Christian Era.

"Whether we consider the great national utility of this work, answering the double purpose of draining a vast section of country & affording a safe medium of transportation, to the exclusion of a dangerous coast navigation, or the simplicity of the means adopted in its construction, it does equal honour, to the sagacity & energy & industry of the people that planned & exec[illegible]

...ced the great [illegible] ...
...d along the whole northern frontier of the Empire & co...
taining materials sufficient to build a considerable wall that
would belt the earth. What nation it may be asked has
ever completed works any thing like these in extent & mag=
nitude? — "The products of their manufacturing skill
stand unrivalled both as to ingenuity & splendour by
those of any other nation in the world"

But the most remarkable of all is, that it is now
pretty certain, that what are justly considered in Europe
as three of the most important discoveries or inventions of
modern times, the art of printing, the composition of gunpowder
& the magnetic compass, had their first origin in China
"However much others may have outstripped them in the use
or application of these agents, the Chinese can urge claims to
the priority of possession sufficient to convince any unprejudiced
person; & it seems fair to conclude that the knowledge or
tradition of these contrivances, travelled slowly westward through
the channels of Oriental commerce, & were obscurely derived
by those who first imported them to Europe, by the way of Asia
Minor or the Red Sea. There cannot be the least doubt of
the art of printing having been practised in China during the
10th century of our Era. The precise mode of operation is cer=
tainly different from ours; but the main principle that of
multiplying & cheapening books, by saving the time & labour
of transcription, is altogether the same." Dugald Stewart
in his work on the philosophy of the human mind, con=
siders the invention of printing "rather as the result of the
general causes on which the progress of society seems to
than as the mere effect of fortunate acci...

no effect as a step in the [illegible] particular point of his progress. Admitting this to be true it would follow that the Chinese in the 10th century, were not only farther advanced than their contemporaries of Europe (of which there can be no doubt whatever) but that they had reached a higher point of civilization than the ancient Greeks & Romans.

"The composition of gunpowder was understood long before they were acquainted with its application to the use of fire arms the knowledge of which they derived from the west. It is said that a Holy Father from Rome Pere Verbiest was employed to superintend the casting of some hundred guns the first made in the empire; a union of military pursuits with clerical which though it might be creditable to his enterprize, highly scandalized his profession. —

"The attractive power of the loadstone has been known to the Chinese from remote antiquity, but its property of communicating polarity to iron is first distinctly noticed in a Chinese dictionary finished AD 121. Under the head of loadstone appears this definition: "a stone with which a direction can be given to the needle," and not far from this time ships were steered by a kind of compass. —— * note

"The social character of the Chinese is much farther advanced than that of any other heathen nation. Their theories upon this subject are almost perfect, though it must be acknowledged the same cannot be said of their practice. But here great allowances must be made for the modifications of the national character effected by various causes.

* "From this it will be seen that the present stagnant & perhaps retrograde state of the arts & sciences in China is not owing to any want of genius in the people. Their obstinate refusal to improve is rather to be viewed as the effect of principle. They have an indomitable propensity, to pay superstitious reverence to every thing antiquated. They consider their sages, kings & governments, as the very prototypes of excellence; approximation to the times in which they lived, the highest national wisdom & virtue. —

As (among the most important of these may be mentioned) the incorporation of those wild Scythian hordes that poured in from the north under their conquering Khan, like a resistless torrent, & rested not until they had securely seated their victorious leader on the throne of the empire. It will not be considered strange if an unfavourable influence has been exerted by the ferocious spirit of these barbarous invaders, on the more mild & polished character of the Chinese. Many amiable traits however are still discoverable. — As evidence of this may be mentioned their unbounded respect & obedience to parents & elders, as well as kindness to their kindred. In their book of sacred instructions, read publicly on certain occasions by the principal magistrates, 16 discourses are headed by that which teaches the duty of children to parents, of Juniors to Elders, & hence of the people to the government. — Mencius (who is to them an inspired writer) says. "were all men to love their kindred & respect their elders, the world would be at peace." — Public opinion considers it the duty of well conditioned relatives, to support & assist those who are allied to them by ties of consanguinity; & the best maintenance of the poor, & the best provision for the due distribution of wealth, consists in the manner in which both law & custom enforce among them the claims of kindred. What a lesson for Christian society, where sometimes even those who have made a profession of religion are rolling in wealth, and their next of kin pining away in neglected poverty or subsisting on the scanty pittance of public Charity.* But it may be said their precepts are better than their practice. — True. — But may not the same thing be said emphatically of even Christian nations. — and even

* The following sentiments which the emperor of China in 1713 directed his ambassadors to deliver to the Russian government, are worthy of any nation in any age. "If you are asked" said he "what we principally esteem & reverence in China you may thus reply. In our empire fidelity, filial piety, charity justice, & sincerity, are esteemed above all things. We observe, & abide by them. They are the principles upon which we administer the empire & govern ourselves. We likewise make sacrifices & oblations; we pray for good things & deprecate evil things; but if we did not act honestly, if we were not actuated by pious, charitable, just & sincere, of what avail would be our pr-

taking practical virtue as the standard they do not suffer in some particulars by comparison with the people of more enlightened countries. — It is well known that poverty is no reproach among them & wealth no claim to particular respect. The two things to which they pay the most deference, are, stations derived from personal merit, & the claims of venerable old age. — The last was signally honoured by Kang Hy the second Emperor of the reigning family. An inferior officer of more than a hundred years of age, having come to an audience to do homage, the Emperor rose from his seat & met him, desiring the old man to stand up without ceremony, & telling him he paid this respect to his great age. To this influence of age & authority, may be traced, the peaceful & prudential character of the people. In consequence of this individuals of succeeding generations, living entirely under the control of the oldest surviving heads of families, the ignorant & inexperienced are guided by the more mature judgement of the elders, and the sallies of folly & rashness are easily restrained. The effects of this example & early habit are equally visible in their conversation. And thus the Chinese frequently get the better of Europeans in a discussion, by imperturbable coolness & gravity. — It is a part of their policy, to gain the advantage by letting their opponent work himself into a passion, & place himself in the wrong; hence the more necessity of carefully preserving the temper with them. —

But great as their regard for age is, it is second to their respect for learning. — One of their maxims is that "In learning, age & Youth go for nothing; the best informed takes the precedence". And accordingly the chief source of rank & consideration in China is cultivated talent; & whatever may be the character of the learning on which it is exercised, this is at least — a more legitimate as well as more beneficial object of respect, than the vulgar pretensions of wealth & fashion, or the accidental ones of Mere birth. —

"The consequences of this almost extraordinary respect — and admiration are visible in the elevations of their literary character. "One of the most remarkable national peculiarities of the Chinese," Sir George Staunton "is their extraordinary addiction to letters,

the general prevalence of literary habits among the middling & higher ~~orders~~ classes; & the very honourable preeminence, which from the most remote period has been universally conceded to that class which is exclusively devoted to literary pursuits. Since the memorable era of Confucius the Chinese empire has been repeatedly dismembered, & again restored to its integrity; its sceptre has passed through the hands of many families or dynasties; it has been a prey to many intestine divisions & revolutions, & it has been twice subdued by a foreign foe; but the reverence of the government & people for the name & institutions of Confucius has survived every change. — Even now under the sway of that comparatively illiterate & warlike race, which conquered the empire in the middle of the 17th century, & still holds it in subjection, several individuals recognized as the actual heirs & representatives of the sage, are decorated with honorary distinctions, & maintained in a state of respectable independence at the public charge. Schools & colleges for the instruction of the people in his doctrines, continue to flourish in every part of the empire; and a competent acquaintance with his writings continues to be an indispensable qualification for civil office. Under the influence of such institutions it is by no means surprizing, that the portion of the community exclusively devoted to letters, should be so much greater in China than it is in any other country on the face of the globe. It is so great as to constitute of itself a distinct class in the state. It is the first & most honourable of the four classes into which the great body of the people is considered as divisible by the Chinese political system — viz the literary, the agricultural, the manufacturing & the mercantile. "Their customary reverence for letters is so great that they will not, it is said tread upon printed or written papers. This may seem extravagant & puerile, but such as respect to the forms & instruments by which knowledge is conveyed could hardly exist altogether independently of a regard for their object.

It may not be amiss here to say a word or two of this great Oriental sage for whom the Chinese entertain so profound a reverence, & whom even a modern poet has elevated to a lofty niche in the temple of fame

Superior, & alone, Confucius stood
Who taught that useful science — to be good

He was nearly contemporary with the Fathers of Grecian history & is said from his early age, to have been indifferent to the ordinary amusements of youth, & devoted to grave & serious pursuits — He employed himself entirely on moral & political sciences, & did not meddle with the common superstitions of his country. He was renowned for his unpretending humility & modesty. — Among the moral doctrines of this great teacher might be noticed (if time permitted) some which have obtained the universal assent of Mankind, & which cannot be surpassed in excellence as rules of conduct. —

Education is more generally diffused in China than in any heathen country & perhaps even more than in any Christian country in the world. Of all the countless millions that constitute the empire, (almost every man (it is said) can read & write sufficiently for the ordinary purposes of life, & a respectable share of these acquirements go low down in the scale of society. This prevalence of education is made more extensive by its being inculcated by precepts, & encouraged by an open competition for the highest rewards. Every town has its public place of instruction, & wealthy families have private tutors.

With regard to the science of China but little can be said, at least as to theoretical science. In the natural sciences they have made considerable proficiency, as well as in what may be called practical philosophy, or philosophy as applied to the arts. — They posess & understand the manufacture of some of the most important chemical compounds particularly those of Mercury. —

"Their Medical practice is based upon the chimeras of astrological science & participates in all the absurdities such a system might be expected to generate. But the prevalence of such nonsense in China will not surprize us when we remember that little more than a century has passed since many educated physicians in Great Britain, ~~&~~ were guided in their prescriptions by the horoscope, & talked learnedly of the hour of Mars, the hour of Saturn &c — that a few years since animal magnetism was in all its glory — & that in our own day the world is all agog with a system that ascribes to infinitesimal & invisible particles, a magical, not to say a miraculous influence. The modus operandi, its votaries do not pretend to explain or even to denominate. Would it not be short & a safe cut for them to call it astrological

"The religious character of the Chinese is just what it might be expected to be from their heterogeneous mixture of blank atheism with ~~shreds~~ parts of various systems; for almost all kinds of false religion that ever found their way in the world seem to have found their way to China, where, with various modifications they now exist. But they exist without any life giving principles; systems they are without foundation & without order; framed in darkness & upheld by ignorance & superstition. It is unnecessary for us to say any thing in particular of their three sects Ju or Confucianism — Ho or Budhism, & Jaou or rationalism. But it may be remarked in passing of Ho or Budhism, that the resemblance between its ritual in their temples & the Roman Catholic ceremonies has excited the attention of Mr Gutzlaff. "That they count their prayers (says he) by means of a rosary, & chant masses both for the living & the dead; that they live in a state of celibacy, shave their heads fast &c — might perhaps be accounted for as a mere coincidence of errors into which men are prone to fall

but their adoration of "Tien-How or the Queen of Heaven" called also Shang-moo or Holy Mother must be a tenet engrafted upon Bad heirn from modern traditions. They sometimes call her also Our Lady the Queen of Heaven. They have also in one of their works entitled "A complete history of Gods & Genii" an accurate though brief account of the birth, life, sufferings, & death of our Saviour under the name of Yaysoo, which must also have been derived from a source at least nominally christian.

It would hardly be considered strange if under the influence of these superstitions & atheism combined the Chinese had no moral character at all. But even in this respect they are superior to almost every nation that does not enjoy a greater degree of light. Not withstanding many alas! too many dark spots attest the absence of the great source of moral influence upon mankind still we have good reason to believe their crimes have been magnified & multiplied beyond the reality. Some have represented the crime of infanticide as prevailing to an unprecedented degree throughout the empire — & to such an extent in Canton, that they were obliged to send carts about the streets to pick up the dead infants. Our countryman Mr Abeel has undoubtedly been misled on this point; probably by Barrow, who tells awful stories. Mr Davis of whom we have before spoken & who was 20 years resident in China, says of this crime "we believe the amount of it has, by most writers, been overrated. No doubt in occasional instances of female births infanticide does exist; but these cases certainly occur only in the chief cities, & the most crowded population, where the difficulty of subsistence takes away all hope from the poorest persons, of being able to rear their offspring. The Chinese are generall peculiarly fond of their children, & the attachment seems to be mutual.

The instances at Canton of the bodies of infants being found floating are not frequent & may reasonably in some cases, be attributed to accident, where such multitudes are brought up from their births in small boats. There never was a more absurd blunder than to charge to infanticide those instances in which the infants are found floating with a hollow gourd about their persons; as if the gourd were a part of the system of exposure! Why the very object of attaching those gourds to the children living in boats is to save them from the risk of being drowned, & to float them until they can be pulled out of the water.

But we are neither the defenders or apologists of the sons of the Celestial Empire. We would only with regard to this as every thing else if possible correct misrepresentation.

We shall consider at present but one more of the striking characteristics of this peculiar people, namely their exclusiveness; the restraints they put upon foreign intercourse — Their dogged obstinacy on this point has been attributed to Pride ignorance arrogance jealousy & all sorts of unworthy motives. But that perfect justice is not done in this way at any rate to the original natives of the country we think can be shown. — There is abundant evidence that these restraints did not exist until after the conquest of the country by the Tartars. Before the 7th century, it appears from native records that missions were sent from China to the neighbouring nations for the purpose of soliciting mutual intercourse. Their trading junks have been seen as far west as the coast of Malabar & the people have always extolled the benefits of industry & free trade. The difficulty therefore may be attributed in the first place, to the fears which the Tartar government entertains regarding the effects of increased knowledge upon the stability of its dominion;

But in the second place to the early misconduct of foreigners themselves. The Portuguese who were the first Europeans that visited the country, impressed the Chinese with a very unfavourable idea of Europeans; & when in course of time they came to be competitors with the English & Dutch, the contests of mercantile avarice tended to place them all in a still worse point of light. To this day the character of Europeans is described as that of a race of men, intent alone on the gain of commercial traffic, & regardless altogether of the means of its acquirement Struck says a British resident by the perpetual hostilities that existed among these foreign adventurers, assimilated in other respects by a resemblance in their costumes and manners; the government of the country became disposed to treat them with a degree of jealousy & exclusion, which is had not deemed necessary to be exercised towards the more peaceable & well ordered Arabs, their predecessors Some of the Portuguese when expelled from the country for bad conduct, commenced a system of piracy along the coast, & a desperado named Pinto came from Portugal with a crew as abandoned as himself, made a descent upon the coast, & to the consternation of the horror-stricken Chinese who had never dreamed of such monsters, invaded the sanctity of the royal mausoleums, disturbed the repose of the dead, & spoiled them of their costly arrays. Many other cases of foreign insolence & aggression equally aggravated might be mentioned. — Is it any wonder then that the government came to the determination to treat them all as barbarians? Is there any probability of these restrictions being removed? With regard to this it may be premised; that nothing is to be gained by submission, or yielding in any way to their arrogant pretensions either on the part of government or individuals.

The reward received by a Dutch Embassy that went through with the performance of the ceremony called the ko-tow is an illustrative case in point. In return for beating their heads 9 times against the ground, they had some broken victuals sent them as from the emperor Of these however Mr. Braam in his account observes "they were principally sheeps trotters which appeared to have been already gnawed clean - This disgusting mess, he adds, was upon a dirty plate & appeared rather destined to feed a dog than to form the repast of a human creature. — If however other nations in their intercourse while they manifest a conciliatory spirit toward China will maintain a proper self respect; we may hope the day is not far distant when this barrier will be broken down.

There are many causes now in operation that are supposed to tend directly to this desirable end. Among these may be mentioned the fact that there is among the Chinese a very decided repugnance to the Tartar rule, & they live in the hope & expectation that it will one day be overthrown. There are several very extensive secret societies in the empire, that are said to have this for their great object; & on this account they are the constant dread of the government —

In addition to this, there is an independent & apparently invincible race of people inhabiting one of the districts in the very heart of the empire. They are restless & refractory & hang upon the brow of their native mountains, like a gathering thunder-cloud, ready to burst at any moment & overwhelm the Northern intruders. They have been kept in check thus far only by the most soothing & conciliating efforts on the part of the Government —

"From these indications, the most judicious observers anti-
pate the speedy ejection of the Tartar dynasty, & with it its
miserable Exclusive system.—

"The strong admiration & even absolute veneration
of the Chinese from the highest to the lowest for learning &
learned Men will have a strong tendency to subvert their
inveterate prejudices against barbarians as they call them. It was by superior
scientific knowledge, that the Roman Catholic Missio-
naries acquired so much influence as to make them almost
~~necessary~~ & obtained so strong a hold in the empire that it
was not easy to dislodge them. Some more worthy Missionary
may make himself as useful & necessary to the Govern-
ment as they did. It would not be wonderful if medical science
alone should be the means under God of opening the
door of access to the whole ~~of the~~ country

"The overflowing population of the country, beginning
now almost to exceed the means of subsistence, is another cause
from which we think it could be demonstrated, did time permit, that
this state of things cannot much longer exist. —

Lastly — It has always been supposed that if the Chinese
should once be deprived of their monopoly in the growth and
manufacture of teas, they would be obliged to submit to
the laws of intercourse established among other nations. —
In 1834 it was discovered that the tea plant is indigenous
to Assam one of the E I companies territories. If its cultivation
there should be successful the most important consequences may
follow — When we remember that the quantity of tea
exported from China annually is about 50.000.000 lbs
& estimate the amount of human labour engaged in raising
manufacturing & transporting it & then suppose for a moment

y whole thrown back upon their hands, we can
isastrous must be the consequences, & that they m
probably be brought to terms

But whether these are all mere speculation
or not, we know certainly from the "sure word of prophe
that the time for this desirable event must come sooner o
later. May God in his good providence hasten it.
Let us pray for the speedy arrival of the day, whe
the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, sh
penetrate all the dark recesses of this vast empire and
from the innumerable multitude of its inhabitants the
voice of praise shall ascend like the noise of many
waters. —